

Management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools: A case study of selected primary schools in the Central West Education Division

By

Alice Lomosi

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STUDENT DECLARATION.

I declare that the research work “Management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools: A case study of selected primary schools in the Central West Education Division,” is my own work and that all the quotes or sources used have been indicated by means of complete references. The thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Leadership and Management at Mzuzu University. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of student.....

Signature

Date

Name of supervisor

Signature

Date

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Above all I thank the Almighty God for making it possible for me to have such a healthy life during my study.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Mr. Frazer P. Lomosi Phiri who insisted that I should join teaching profession, and my mother Mrs. L. Lomosi, my lovely husband Bryson Kagwam'minga, my children Amon Kondwani, Chikondi, Chimwemwe and the entire family members for enduring all the pains, financial hardships and my absence from home during the whole period of my study.

ABSTRACT

Learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools require support as they meet a lot of challenges. Most of the regular school managers have no skills about special needs education. A qualitative study guided by the interpretivist paradigm under instructional theory was used to assess ways of managing learners with visual impairment in selected mainstream primary schools in Central West Educational Division (CWED). The study investigated school managers' level of knowledge about Visual Impairment, assessed how school managers support learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools and identified challenges affecting proper management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools.

The study used a qualitative research design on interpretivism paradigm and an Instructional Theory of Management. It adopted a case study approach to get an in-depth understanding of management of learners with vi in the mainstream schools. The study employed two data collecting methods which are face to face interviews and focus group discussions. The study population comprised of head teachers, deputy heads, specialist teachers and section heads. Adding up to a total of eighteen participants who were purposefully selected from three schools. These were from urban, semi-urban and rural educational sectors. In each school, the researcher selected six participants comprising of one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, three sectional heads and one specialist teacher. Data was collected through interviews with the head teachers and deputy head teachers, then Focus Group discussion with all the six participants in a particular school. Data obtained was transcribed, coded and themes were identified.

The research findings revealed that in the urban, semi-urban and rural mainstream schools, school managers do not have adequate skills and knowledge on visual impairment. As a result, these school managers find it difficult to identify learners with visual impairment more

especially those with low vision hence support for learners with visual impairment is lacking in the mainstream schools.

Furthermore, the study established that there were many factors that affect proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. Some of the factors are; inadequate teaching and learning resources, large number of learners in the mainstream classrooms, negative attitudes towards learners with visual impairment, lack of specialist teachers and lack of teacher support in the mainstream schools.

The study, therefore, recommends that there is need to train all the regular teachers in basic skills needed to support students having visual impairment. The skills will provide effective support in the mainstream schools.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
SNE	Special Needs Education
MoEST	Ministry of Education Science and Technology.
VI	Visual Impairment
HI	Hearing Impairment
LD	Learning Difficulties
IE	Inclusive Education
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organizations.
UN	United Nations.
LVI	Learners with Visual Impairment

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Learners with visual impairment need to be properly supported if they are to benefit from education in schools. Mainstream schools have a task of ensuring that learners with diverse needs and regular ones are all cared for and given the required support. This can be a challenge to most school managers handling learners with visual impairment in their schools. This chapter provides background information, problem statement as well as purpose of the study, significance of the study the research objectives and the theoretical framework that guided a study on management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools.

1.2 Background of the study

Learners with different impairments have customarily been marginalized or excluded from schools. The challenge of marginalizing and excluding learners from education has been placed on the political agenda in many countries because of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs (Bornman, 2017). Malawi is one of the countries that has agenda on learners with special needs, as such, special needs education was introduced in Malawi. Special services were provided to the learners with a particular impairment such as visual impairment, hearing impairment and learning difficulties. This was where all learners with impairments were enrolled and taught by specialized teachers with special materials according to a category of impairment.

1.2.1 Special need education (SNE)

Special Needs Education (SNE) is an instruction designed to meet the unique learning needs of children with different impairments (Ministry of Education Science and Technology, 2013). It is a practice of educating students in a way that it addresses their individual differences or

exceptionalities whose needs cannot be met in an ordinary school. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2016) defines learners with special educational needs (SEN) as people who require special service and support to access their education and maximize their learning process. In other words, any impairment such as visual impairment is not a barrier to successful learning or other achievements, if the person with visual impairment receives appropriate support in an appropriate way at an appropriate time (Ferreira & Sefotho, 2020) & (Argyropoulosa, Masourab, Tsiakalia, Nikolarazi, & Lappa, 2017).

1.2.2 Purpose of special needs education

SNE primarily focusses on enabling students with impairments to learn in the modified environment and/or to learn with individualized accommodations for the diagnosed disabilities. The provision of special needs education is seen as one of the avenues of reaching out to and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and the neglected people, including those with visual impairment (Acheampong, Rockson, & Acheampong, 2021). In addition, education as a human right is vital for all children all over the world, including those with disabilities, because it creates opportunities for individuals to engage in productive adventures.

It is worth noting that most persons with disabilities, particularly children with visual impairment, face significant barriers to their human rights in most parts of the world (Mckenzie & Meyerson, 2021).

1.2.2 Different impairments in Malawi.

The Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the south central part of Africa. Malawi is densely populated country with around 80% of its population living in rural areas BBC (2015). 0-25 SEND Code of Practice (2015) explains that there are several categories of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Learners with special educational needs refers to those children that have problems or impairments that make it harder for them to learn than most children of the same

age (Save the Children, 2016). There are several categories of s These are deaf blind (DB), hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI) and learning difficulties (LD). Deaf blind is a duo sensory disability resulting from a combination of both hearing impairment and vision loss Hearing impairment (HI) is defined as inability to hear sound adequately due to improper development, damage or disease to any part of hearing mechanism. Visual impairment (VI) refers to a loss of vision or damage to an eye. According to Bassey, Ellison, & Walker (2018) visual impairment is any defect in the eye that causes difficulty in reading and seeing. Visual impairment is a term that describes a vast array of disorders affecting the visual field and vision acuity of an individual's eye sight. People with visual impairment includes those with blindness and those who are partially sighted or low vision (WHO 2017). Low vision applies to all individuals who are unable to read at a normal viewing distance even with the aid of regular accessories such as eye glasses or contact lenses. Students with low vision use a combination of vision and other senses to learn. These are persons who are not blind but only have a reduced vision. A learner can have residual vision that can only, in some cases, see near or far objects. Persons with refractive errors are those who suffer short or long sightedness that can be corrected using lens Sihota and Tandon (2011).

Learners with visual impairment face a lot of challenges when acquiring and processing information as social beings. Common knowledge tells that people consider someone to have visual impairment only when totally blind thus those with low vision having sight problems, are not properly taken care of. This demonstrates lack of understanding on what visual impairment is. From my experience as a specialist teacher, learners with visual impairment experience a lot of challenges and more than peoples' expectations. In most schools, teachers ignore learners with visual impairment more especially those with low vision. Understanding low vision becomes a problem to most of the school managers, unless one is blind. Studies indicate that the quality of life impact of those with visual impairment may be perceived

differently by care providers who tend to underestimate the impact of vision loss in an individual. McCoy et al (2016) stated that learners with visual impairment lack access to information from the society such that they miss a lot of opportunities to have experiences and to learn. When the child cannot see parents or peers, he or she may be unable to imitate social behavior or understand nonverbal cues. If not supported, children with visual impairment face a lot of challenges for them to excel in their education.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Malawi is advocating for inclusive education specifically for the most marginalized children with disabilities including those with visual impairment in mainstream schools. However, management of learners with visual impairment (VI) in schools is still a critical issue as there are many challenges barring their education. It has been found that even if there is inclusion in special educational need at all levels, the learners with disabilities are still facing many obstacles. Despite the declaration of inclusive education in regular schools, difficulties are still prevailing in different countries worldwide. In the mainstream schools, some learners still require special need support. United Nations (2013) explores barriers to education for children with disabilities in Malawi. Hagens (2016) explains that most of the regular teachers have no or limited skills and little knowledge about visual impairment and may not know how to handle the learners. Most of the studies done in Malawi have concentrated on identifying challenges affecting learners with visual impairment (Bolutife 2012). There has been little effort to establish how teachers are managing these challenges in the mainstream schools. It is for this background that this study embarks on investigating how these learners with visual impairment are being assisted in the mainstream schools where they are selected to.

1.4 Aim and Objectives of the study

The study aimed at assessing how school managers support learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools and was guided by these specific objectives:

- Examine school managers' level of knowledge on visual impairment
- Assess how the school managers support learners with visual impairment in mainstreaming schools
- Identifying factors affecting proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools

1.5 Significance of the study

The study's aim was to find out how the school heads manage learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. Findings of the study will be valuable in various ways to the school managers handling mainstream schools where there are learners with visual impairment. Firstly, the study would be helpful in identifying gaps in the way schools support learners with visual impairment in overcoming challenges that they meet in mainstreaming schools. Secondly, the study would be helpful in finding out appropriate ways of coping with the challenges that learners with visual impairment meet in the mainstreaming schools. Lastly, the study would be helpful in informing school managers on how best they can accommodate learners with visual impairment in an inclusive setup in the mainstream schools. The study findings are expected to fill the gap in knowledge to the stakeholders who are working on various interventions towards basic education in Malawi.

1.6 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by an Instructional Theory of Management as its theoretical framework. (IMT) by Kounin Jacob who was a psychologist. A theoretical framework defines key concepts

in research, suggests relations between variables, but also discusses theories in relation to the study. It is a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations or structure that can hold or support and inform a particular research. Instructional Theory of Management prescribes how to help people, creating conditions that increase the probability of learning. Dover and Schultz (2018) The theory states that classroom teachers need a leader who is supportive, motivating and knowledgeable. The theory views the importance of the instructional management process through multiple ways that can help the students understand more and enjoy their learning (Reigeluth, 2016). In this case, the experience of visual impairment by a student has a greater impact on the strategies and methodologies used for instruction than on the content the student is exposed to. The theory argues that teachers focus their efforts on improving teaching and learning as instructional leaders.

The theory is applicable to the study because it targets leaders in schools who give support to the teachers working with learners in class. To promote student learning in class, the school managers who provide instructional leadership should have a clear vision for their schools and should communicate this vision to their staff. Moreover, instructional leaders support teachers to improve their practice by giving them access to the resources that they require, coaching and monitoring them and providing professional development opportunities. When goals are clearly defined to the school managers, the teachers are more likely to align their professional development activities and their own professional growth plans to school goals.

1.7 Delineation of the study

The goal of the study was to assess how learners with visual impairment are being managed in selected mainstreaming schools in central west division. The study was carried out in three selected primary schools in Lilongwe District. The participants of the study were school managers and specialist teachers.

1.8 Definitions of words

Blindness: It is a visual acuity of less than 3/60 (0.05) a measurement of the central vision with a total or nearly total loss of the ability to perceive light (Relgeluth and Para 2016).

Disability: Refers to the impairments that limit the ability of a person to perform certain tasks.

Impairment: Any loss or limitation of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function of the body part.

Inclusion: The process of addressing or responding positively to the diversities that exist among the students, through modifying and changing the education systems, to accommodate all children regardless of their physical, physical, socio-economical and intellectual and other conditions.

Inclusive education: Inclusive education refers to the various national and local processes of transformation of education institutions to cater for the needs of all learners, including those with visual or multiple disabilities (Ubisi, 2020).

Low vision: An ability to use some aspects of vision perception, but with a great dependency on information received from other sources.

Visual impairment (VI): A measured loss of any of the visual functions such as an acuity, visual field, colour vision or binocular vision. It is a form of weakening sight either due to biological or result of accidents or failing health (Sefotho, 2020).

Specialist teachers: Teachers who are specifically trained and are assigned to assist learners with impairments.

Special school: A school that provides educational and other related services solely to learners with special educational needs and is staffed by specially trained teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on literature review under different subsections with the aim of providing insight information about the school managers' knowledge about visual impairment (VI), as a category of special needs education (SNE) under which there is visual impairment. The chapter focuses on special needs education, categories of special need learners, visual impairment, Cognitive support, physical support, capacity building, roles of school managers on learners with visual impairment and challenges of visual impairment.

2.2 Special needs education (SNE)

Special needs education has emerged from the basic ideas of teaching individuals with impairments via international declarations and national policies that aim to provide equal education to all. Special needs education is a type of education designed to facilitate the learning of individuals who, for a wide range of reasons, require adaptive pedagogical methods to participate and meet learning objectives in an educational program (Syed Sajid Husain Kazmi, 2021). Dr. Narayan Barik concurred with the above explanation by describing special education need as learners who require special services and support in order to access education and maximize their learning process (Barik, 2018). In other words, special needs education is the design and delivery of teaching strategies for individuals with different disabilities. Learners with special needs may find difficulties learning in the regular schools. Widening access of education to all learners globally has been a key objective of the united nations as per the agreement in the 1994 Salamanca Framework (UNESCO, 2017). In most of the sub-

Saharan African countries granted every child the right to education. In Kenya, the system for supporting children with visual impairment in the mainstream schools precede the countries involvement. In Malawi, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (2013) expressed a concern for learners with special educational needs since 1950 whereby the missionaries provided special needs services to those with visual and hearing impairments. By 1996 the government of Malawi introducing an education for learners with learning difficulties MoEST, (2013). Since its establishment, special need educational services in Malawi have been provided to learners with impairments in different forms known as placement options, such as; special units/rooms, special needs schools and the mainstream schools.

Basically, learners with impairments are placed in separate rooms known as special units or room. These rooms are usually attached to a regular school. The main aim is to assist those with different impairments separately from those without impairments. Lessons are generally, taken by a specialist teacher solely for children with severe learning difficulties, physical disabilities or behavioral problems. In the special units' learners are labeled as 'special students.

Furthermore, learners with special needs are put in their own schools specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate needs. These are known as 'special school'. The schools are assigned for children with a specific impairment, such as schools for learners with visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental health, duo sensory impairment or deaf blind. In addition, the learners are also provided with additional educational needs and other related services. The special needs schools deliver specialized education program that require access to highly intensive learning and other support (Sefotho, 2020).

2.3 Mainstreaming (Inclusion).

Mainstreaming of learners with visual impairment in regular schools provides an opportunity on an education for all. Inclusion of learners with special needs into general educational settings brings an impact to the learners with visual impairment UNESCO (2019). Learners with visual impairment are incorporated into the mainstream of education instead of placing them in a special educational school. This ensures that the learner is accessing all of the same instructional materials that are provided to all learners.

2.3.1 Purpose of mainstreaming.

Mainstream settings ensure that the needs of all students are addressed and that all barriers which can potentially hinder their participation be removed. So, mainstreaming is important because it brings children with disabilities into an ordinary regular school as they learn from one another. The World Health Organization WHO (2011) explains that many with impairments have been excluded from basic education in the primary schools. The focus in the mainstreaming is on an individual child and not on the teachers' skills and system. It also fails to consider what changes are needed in the curriculum or in the organization of the school to ensure that it is accessible to the kind of the diversity needs of all its learners.

Mainstreaming is a human right issue rooted within the concepts of human rights as expressed by the United Nations Convention of the Child and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This act highlights the need to adopt a dual approach to educating children with disabilities in the mainstream (Singal, 2016). This is a recent legislative act enacted by the Government of India that recognize different categories impairments and strictly, enforce the responsibility of providing amanuensis for learners with visual impairment on educational institutions.

Mainstreaming is also known as inclusion. Special educational services provide the same opportunities to learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools as any other child to enjoy every aspect of the school experience from academics to socialization. Different categories of learners with special needs are placed in regular schools for them to learn together with those without impairments. Learners with impairment have a right to access education. They have a right to learn as other learners without impairment does. They are accommodated in the mainstream schools in order for them to succeed and play their roles as reliable citizens of Malawi.

Categories of Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Learners with visual impairment are intergrated in mainstream schools with different impairments such as hearng impairment, and those with other disabilities. Special instructions are then designed specifically for students categorized as having special educational needs (SEN) in these mainstream schools (SEN) (UNESCO 2017). Special educational needs are persons whose capacity to participate in and benefit from education is restricted due to an enduring physical, sensoty, mental healthor learning disability Citizens Information Board (2012). nstructions which are designed for students categorized as having special needs for their education (UNESCO 2017). Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2012) identifies several categories of Special Educational Needs (SEN). The categories are as follows; learners with deaf blind (DB), visual impairment (VI), learning difficulties (LD) and hearing impairment (HI).

Deaf blind is a duo sensory disability resulting from a combination of both hearing impairment and vision loss (Save the Children, 2016). Children under this type of category are singled out educationally because impairments of sight and hearing require thoughtful and unique educational approaches in order to ensure that they have reached their potential. Moreover, this

is a unique type of impairment because a deaf blind child requires teaching methods that are different from those children who are sighted.

Hearing impairment (HI), as one of the categories of special educational needs, is defined as inability to hear sound adequately due to improper development, damage or disease to any part of hearing mechanism. Some children are born with a hearing loss while others develop deafness as they grow. Therefore, deaf students need to be communicated through sign language Save the children, (2016).

The other category of special educational needs is learners with learning difficulties (LD). These are learners with deficits in adaptive behavior manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. This is an umbrella term encompassing all types of impairments. Children with intellectual disabilities, specific learning difficulties, emotional and behavioral difficulties, communication difficulties, physical and healthy impairments, gifted and talented learners, IDEA (2012).

Visual impairment (VI) as another category of special educational needs refers to a loss of vision or damage to an eye. According to Bassey, Ellison, & Walker (2018) visual impairment is any defect in the eye that causes difficulty in reading and seeing. This shows that visual impairment is a term that describes a vast array of disorders affecting the visual field and vision acuity of an individual's eye sight. Visual impairment includes people with blindness and those who are partially sighted /low vision, including those with refractive error. Low vision refers to a severe visual impairment which applies to all individuals with partial sight, who are unable to read at a normal viewing distance even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. Students with low vision use a combination of vision and other senses to learn. People with low vision are not blind but they have a reduced vision. A learner can have residual vision that can only,

in some cases, see near objects. Persons with refractive errors are those who suffer short or long sightedness that can be corrected using lenses Sihota and Tandon (2011).

2.5 Impact of visual impairment on learners.

Visual impairment is regarded as highly prevalent among children in sub-Saharan countries, including Malawi. According to Habulezi (2017) Learners with visual impairment are those that cannot use the sense of sight in the learning process. In most cases, visual impairment is associated with complex trait that encompasses visual functioning and a reduced quality of life in an individual. Students with partial sight demonstrate a loss of vision even when an individual uses corrective glasses or prescribed lenses. Numerous studies have shown that is often associated with various negative outcomes and poor quality of life, Lamoureux and Pesudous (2011). Learners with visual impairment are a heterogeneous group with varied nature of difficulties with their vision that require adequate attention in curriculum implementation for them to achieve good academic performance when placed in regular or mainstream schools. However, Ethiopia, like other low-income countries in Africa, presented challenges in provision of necessary resources for children with visual impairment UNESCO (2020). The prevalence of visual impairment, especially among school-going children, indicates a need for structured support from various organizations (Wale et al., 2019).

Viljoen (2020) says learners with visual impairment require specific support from teachers and parents and peers to acquire skills for social interaction by observing and imitating others, in this area of development. More specifically, social skills need to be taught, opportunities for interaction need to be provided, and responses of others need to be favourable to facilitate social inclusion for the learner with visual impairment. Teachers need to support the learners to become self-aware, in order for them to be able to learn socially accepted behaviour. Without socially accepted behaviour, learners with visual impairment may become even more excluded

and isolated. Teachers can fulfil a meaningful role in the development of socialisation skills of learners with visual impairment, through direct teaching, role play or through the support of peers. Challenges of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream act as barriers to an inclusive education (MIE, 2008). Students with visual impairment face massive trouble to cope with the regular classroom environment. The challenges bring about exclusion, abuse and discrimination to the learners with visual impairment mainly in mainstream schools. These challenges have to be solved through innovative findings, Kumar et al argue that learners with visual impairment are qualified to be normal-sighted individuals in acquiring skills in educational programs (Kumar, 2001). Jones, Minogue, Oppewal, Cook and Broadwell, (2006) explains further that learners with visual impairment can as well be developed as individuals who have full cognitive abilities. UNESCO (2015) holds that, no one must be denied access to education because of disability. One of the main objectives of World Blinds Union (2001) reads that, ensuring quality and trouble-free education, is a must for the development of this large peer and trouble- free impaired people of the human being.

In an inclusive setting, special needs education is provided to all learners in mainstream schools, regardless of their disabilities and diverse needs.

2.6 Cognitive support

Access to an effective learning continues to be a problematic issue to most learners with disability, irrespective of the nation's commitment to scale up efforts to support them at various levels of education Habulez (2012). He added that in Botswana, poor school performance continues to impede their chances to learn beyond the primary level. The support that is provided to learners with visual impairment at a school system contains a cognitive support through the curriculum Viljoen (2020). School managers in full-service and mainstream schools who teach learners with visual impairment need to gain sufficient knowledge by, for

example, consulting reputable websites, reading and following guidelines, attending accredited workshops, short courses or training opportunities, consulting the school support team, and asking for help from peers at schools for learners with visual impairment.

Furthermore, visiting such schools and observing some of the classes, consulting local clinics, hospitals, optometrists or medical doctors, contacting official organisations for the blind, consulting lecturers at medical or education faculties of universities, having a mentor, becoming reflexive practitioners, or joining virtual or real support groups for teachers can also assist a teacher in gaining knowledge, Viljoen (2020)

2.7 Physical support

The performance of learners with visual impairment is related to instructional leadership, training and related practices (Sefotho, 2020). If the school managers are not well informed about the needs of learners with visual impairment, then, management of the learners becomes a problem in the mainstream. The managers face challenges in trying to lead the role of improving performance of

the learners with visual impairment, care and support. Head teachers spend most of the time on administrative matters with less or no attention to delivery of curriculum of the learners with visual impairment. In Uganda a study found that all teachers for learners with visual impairment lacked braille skills and relied on the use of chalkboard instead (Niyisabwa, Munyi, & Muthee, 2018).

2.8 Capacity building

One aspect that a good instructional leader should always invest in, is the capacity building and professional development of staff members, despite budget cuts or financial constraints. When a teacher walks into any class with a diversity of learners, they must be able to optimally teach

the learners or alternatively be mentored and trained by the school to be able to do so. It is the responsibility of the leadership and management of a school to ensure that teachers are equipped to deliver the curriculum successfully with reasonable accommodations so that learners can learn successfully (Viljoen 2020)

If professional development is required, it must thus be sought and provided by, for example, accessing the knowledge and expertise of more experienced teachers, support staff, online courses and short courses offered by universities or non-governmental organizations, the community or even private individuals, consultants or volunteers.

The capacity building of the school managers of learners with visual impairment includes braille training and competence. Even though, some teachers may seem resistant to learn braille and be trained on how to handle learners with visual impairment in the mainstream classrooms. The principle needs to manage such resistance to ensure that teachers are well trained to support learners with visual impairment in the best possible way. Viljoen (2020) argues that only if braille competent, school managers will be able to meaningfully mark learners' work, examinations and tests and give sensible feedback, in support of quality education provision to all learners. More importantly, the Government under Ministry of Education is chiefly responsible for overseeing policy implementation and mainstreaming of SNE issues, providing technical and delivering SNE assistance at all educational levels.

2.9 Roles of the school managers

The role of the school managers or head master is to support the skillful delivery of the curriculum. The teachers are the key role players and main resources for the realization of special education. Mariga et al. (2014). The school managers are responsible to support in the care and capacity building of teachers and learners (Sefotho, 2020). Head teachers can delegate some of the administrative functions so that they use the space to engage with the instruction

in the mainstream schools and development of themselves and staff members to deliver the curriculum on learners with visual impairment.

On the same, the National Council of Educational Research and Training meeting minutes states that with the enactment of Right to Education Act, learners with visual impairment can no longer be kept in “ghettoes of special schools” (Training, 2014).

2.10 Inclusive education

The goal of inclusive education is that the whole education system will facilitate learning environments where school managers and specialist teachers in the mainstream schools embrace and welcome the challenge and benefits of diversity. The inclusive education's intention is to foster learning environments where individual's needs are to be met. The mainstream schools need to be adjusted in order to accommodate those learners with impairment. The school managers, specialists in conjunction with the regular teachers, form an integral part in establishing the learners' environment and the school environment. In general, they need to provide a safe and supportive atmosphere where all learners are prepared to interact and learn from others.

Some teachers may seem resistant to learn braille, the principal needs to manage such resistance in order to ensure that teachers are well-trained to support learners in the best possible way (Bulat., 2017). Only if braille competent, an educator will be able to meaningfully mark learners' homework, examinations and tests and give sensible feedback, in support of quality education provision to all learners. A principal of a school at which all the educators are braille literate put it bluntly in the 'If educators do not know braille, they are of no assistance to learners. In the same way, learners who show resistance for braille should be managed and supported to become competent and use this communication medium to their benefit.

Closely related, teaching methods and the improvement of curriculum content knowledge should remain a priority in all schools. The same applies for computer literacy of school managers in order for them to effectively deliver the curriculum to learners with visual impairment. In many countries the possibility of providing the required facilities to ease the educational pursuit of the learners with visual impairment is difficult. Academic systems and institutions globally have faced pressure of increasing number of learners with visual impairment. The situation in Africa is generally worse, more especially Malawi. The challenges on large classes is very common in the most primary schools. These learners need to learn the same subjects and academic skills as their sighted peers.

2.11 Chapter summary

This chapter has focused on a number of issues encompassing learners with visual impairment. With special needs education, learners are included in the mainstream schools. The main purpose is to accommodate these learners in an inclusive set up. Learners with visual impairment still lag behind due to a number of factors that need to be electrified for them to succeed in mainstream schools. The chapter has highlighted on Special needs education as an umbrella term for various categories of impairments, such as visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning difficulties and others. So, learners with visual impairment need physical support in the mainstream school for them to be guided from angle to another. In addition, this chapter has discussed the cognitive support in the mainstream schools by the school managers as they acquire their education in their schools. Furthermore, the chapter has also discussed the capacity building on how the school managers should facilitate in the mainstream classrooms even in the absence of the specialist teachers. Finally, the chapter has looked at the roles of the school managers in an inclusive set up in the mainstream primary schools.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter outlines research methods that were used in the study. These include research paradigm, research approach and design, site of study, research sample, sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, data analysis methods, trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm.

The study takes an interpretivist view in order to explore certain individual's experiences and point of view on provision and support of learners with visual impairment. This is a philosophical view that focuses on an individual not a group. The study looks at how individuals construct and make sense of the world and how the social world is interpreted (Robson, 2011). This entails that the study describes culture which is trying to develop an empathetic understanding of the world of others. School managers in the mainstream schools need to understand and manage learners with visual impairment as individuals. The paradigm has been chosen as a way to understand, explain and expose social reality through what concerns individual participants and their perceptions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). This paradigm helps the researcher to understand each school within its natural setting.

3.3 Research approach and design.

This study used qualitative approach and case study design. The study assumed that the school managers construct realities in their schools as individuals and through interactions with the visually impaired students. To investigate ways in which head teachers, section heads and specialist teachers manage the challenges that learners with visual impairment face in mainstream schools, generic inductive approach and a case study design were used. In a case

study, a single case is studied for instance; a child, a class, a school or a community. This provides real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly rather than generalization (Hohen 2007). A generic inductive approach is a flexible approach that allows a researcher to adjust the study based on how the research question develops in four stages of research question, purposive sampling procedure, data collection and analysis based on emerging themes (Liu, 2016). So, this was a multiple case study and the cases were three schools. According to Creswell (2014) a study extending to several cases is a collective case study. The author further explains that in a collective case study, individual cases are selected because it is believed that comprehending them leads to better understanding of larger cases. So, use of multiple cases in a study provides an opportunity for inter-case and intra-case approaches of analyzing data. A case study allows to explore a phenomenon within its context (Khalifa, 2019). Qualitative methods were chosen with an aim of getting in-depth understanding information which would directly be captured from the school managers within the school environment. This study tried to gain the insights and understanding of the challenges facing school managers in supporting learners with visual impairment in the primary mainstream schools.

3.4 Study sample

3.4.1 Study site

The study took place in three primary schools in the Central West Education division (CWED) in Lilongwe District. One primary school was mainly situated in the urban sector, another primary was selected from semi-urban primary schools, and the other primary was selected from rural area within Lilongwe district. These schools were chosen because they accommodate learners with visual impairment. In addition, the researcher found Lilongwe district to be suitable for the study because of the availability of the urban, semi urban and rural

schools which were the target of this study. Moreover, the researcher is based in Lilongwe such that, it was easy to select the schools which were within. Of the three, two were regular schools while one was a special needs boarding school.

3.4.2 Study Population

The population of the study comprised of school managers such as head teachers, deputy head teachers, specialist teachers and section heads. These were targeted because they are key players in the management of schools. In each selected primary school, one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, one specialist teacher and three section heads were purposefully targeted. The study, therefore, involved 18 participants in total.

3.4.3 School sample

The researcher used purposeful sampling to choose the three schools which involved in this study. The three schools were purposely selected among many schools in Lilongwe district in the Central West Educational Division. School A, School B and School C were selected because they accommodate learners with vi. Amongst these three schools, one was situated in the rural site, another was from the urban area sector, and then the other one was situated in the semi-urban areas. The schools were chosen because the researcher wanted to collect a rich information from School managers who work with vi learners different learning environments. In school A there were 7 learners with low vision and 2 were blind. At school B there were 2 vi learners, one with deaf blindness and at school C there were 46 blind learners and 1 with low vision. The following schools were selected; school A school B and school C were selected because they enroll learners with visual impairment

3.4.4 Sample size

In this study, the three schools which were involved were government primary schools. Three primary schools were purposively selected in Central West Educational division (CWED), particularly in Lilongwe district. The researcher selected mainstream schools which accommodate learners with visual impairment. From each school, six participants were chosen for FGDs. And face to face interviews also involved the six participants. The researcher selected these six school managers to participate in this research because they are the ones who manage the school and also because they are key role players of the activities at the school as managers. The participants were one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, three section heads and one specialist teacher adding up to six per school.

3.5 Sampling technique

A research sample is a group of people taken from a larger population for measurement (Hajian, 2014). This is a representation of the population for measurement. Three schools were purposively selected in the Central West Division. One primary school from the urban sector, another one from rural and the third one was from semi-urban. The criterion for selecting each school was that the school should have learners with visual impairment who were accommodated in the mainstream classrooms (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

The specialist teachers and school managers, such as the head teachers, deputy heads and section heads were the core focus in the study for face to face semi structured interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). These heads were involved in the study because they are managers of the schools, and they act as key players in a school. The participants for the Focused Group Discussions per school included; three section heads (from senior, junior and infant sections), a head teacher, a specialist teacher and a deputy head teacher. These

participants were also involved in the face to face interviews, such that, in the three schools, the study was comprised of a total number of 18 participants.

3.6 Data collection methods and instruments

3.6.1 Interviews

Data was collected through face to face semi structured interviews. The researcher used semi-structures interview questions to guide the interview. The interview that allowed participants to express themselves, and also not to be interrupted for them to generate in-depth information. An interview guide was used during interviews as an instrument. Cohen et al (2011) explains that, use of semi-structured interviews is flexible and multi-sensory regarding data collection. The semi-structured interviews guided the researcher to collect both verbal and non-verbal. The guide had nine questions and Table 3.1 outlines these questions and why each question was asked.

Table 3.1: Questions asked during interviews

S/n	QUESTIONS ASKED	REASON FOR ASKING THE QUESTION
1.	Share with us your experience how you handle LVI class	Determine knowledge of the teacher on VI
2.	What kind of expertise do you have that help in handling LVI classes	Determine knowledge of the teacher on VI
3.	What kind of support do you need to strengthen your teaching skills for LVI	Determine knowledge gap of teachers on VI
4.	What kind of support do you provide to LVI	To investigate management support of LVI

5.	How do you provide the support to the LVI	To investigate management support of LVI
6.	What are the key components for managing LVI class	Determine factors that affect management of learners with LVI
7	What administrative roles does the school employ to manage LVI	Determine factors that affect management of learners with LVI
8	How do you involve learners with visual impairment in the school activities?	Determining factors that affect management of learners with visual impairment
9.	What challenges do you face in managing LVI in the classroom?	Determining factors that affect management of LVI in their classroom.

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions involved head teachers, deputy head teachers, heads of sections, specialist teachers. Guiding questions were used as a tool for the Focus Group Discussions. These guiding questions were used in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the issues concerning ways of managing learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. The discussions mainly focused on how the school heads manage challenges that learners with visual impairment face and how they are supported. The guiding questions were used in the Focus Group Discussions as an instrument. In each school understudy, six participants were involved in the FGD who were; one head teacher, one deputy head teacher, three section heads from senior, junior and infant sections making six participants. Since the study involved three schools with six participants from each school, Therefore, the study had three FGDs in the three schools. A question guide was used as an instrument for the FGDs. The school managers were involved in the FGDs because they are the ones who manage the schools. In order for the

school managers to provide in- depth information since they are the key players of managing the school. The focus group discussions allowed members to express their ideas on ways of managing learners with vi in the mainstream schools. Specialist teachers are the key players and managers of the learners with vi. So, these managers expressed themselves and what they know about vi and be able to compare and contrast the points of view in a free-flowing discussion (Baral et. al, 2016).

3.7 Data management methods

Owan and Bassey (2019) data management as a process of ingesting, storing, organizing and maintaining the data created and collected by an organization. A researcher needs to secure the data collected in order to effectively address the purpose of the study. Data management process includes a combination of different functions that collectively ensure that the data collected is accurate and available. So, the researcher collected enough data using the right instruments. Notes were taken from what the respondents explained. The researcher also recorded what the participants gave as their ideas using a voice recorder. To enhance total security of the information to be collected, the researcher saved the information in a computer. Then, the collected information was transcribed into a plain language so that people would easily interpret. The findings are to be used by the different stakeholders for further interventions in order to fill the gaps that were unveiled as a foundation for further studies.

3.9 Data analysis methods

The study adopted a Thematic analysis that looked at word frequency definition of data and context (Cohen 2018). The study used standard word-processing to manage markups and notes on the data, wherein tools like comments, tables, and columns were employed to store different aspects of the analysis tables and graphs were derived from excel. The findings are based on interpreting the meaning of the participants' responses (Dey, 2005). The data were coded and

developed into categories. And a five-step inductive analysis followed with initial reading, identified areas related to the study objectives, name or label emerging categories and merging categories that appear to be similar. Thematic followed six steps as indicated in the Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Steps in developing themes

S/n	Step	Description
1.	Familiarizing with the data through thoroughly reading the transcriptions	This helps the researcher to have in mind what exactly is in the data.
2,	Generation of initial codes	Putting labels or descriptions on a list of ideas developed from the transcription as already read by the researcher.
3.	Searching for themes	Related codes are organized under different themes.
4.	Reviewing the themes	The themes developed are reviewed for their relevance and legitimacy of being called themes
5.	Defining and naming themes developed	Defining the overall content of the themes and the message it carries in it before producing a report
6.	Producing a report	Researcher is already satisfied with the themes developed

Source: (Mwakeja, 2013)

3.10 Ethical consideration

The ethical clearance was sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethical Committee (see Appendix A) before data collection started. Request letters were sent to the Director of Basic Education. Permission was obtained from the Educational Division Manager (EDM) from

Central West Educational Division. The requested letters were sent to District Educational Officers for Lilongwe Urban, Lilongwe Rural East and Lilongwe Rural West and also to the head teachers for the three schools in rural, urban and semi urban. (see Appendices B, C, D). So, the research considered ethical matters, such that, the researcher did not violate any ethics. Sought an Introductory letter and got informed consent confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents through data collection, data analysis and data interpretation (see Appendix E). an approval was granted from MZUNIREC. (see Appendix F). The participants' views were respected (Gray, 2013). The interviews were conducted in a peaceful and none stressful manner, such that, the data collected was kept confidentially throughout the process. The interviewees were told that they will have access to the data if they so wished. (Cohen et. al.,2018)

3.10.1 Informed Consent

The Consent forms were given to the participants in advance to let them get prepared psychologically whether to participate or not. Resnik (2015) explains that getting consent from participants should be the first thing before research begins. So, the researcher should explain all the tasks that are to be carried out during the data collection such as signing of the consent forms (see Appendix G)

3.10.2 Voluntary Participation

The participant voluntarily gave their opinions and facts freely using the interview guide was used (see Appendix H). The participants were not forced to participate in the study during data collection and were informed that they could withdraw at any point. Focused group discussions were guided by guided questions and participants were also had a free discussion (see Appendix I).

3.10.3 Confidentiality and Anonymity

Liu and Maitlis (2010) define confidentiality as non-disclosure of any information whether, oral, written or recorded obtained in confidence during research period. In this study, the researcher Anonymity is the protection of the participant and site. Therefore, in this study, names of the participants and sites were not mentioned. The researcher has used pseudo names instead (as on Focused Group Discussions – see Appendix J)

3.11 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to transferability, credibility, dependability and confirmability of the findings in a study (Stahl and King, 2020).

Transferability looks at how the qualitative researcher demonstrates that research findings are applicable to similar situations, populations and phenomena. In this study transferability has been achieved by seeking understanding from other contexts which similar phenomena in order to make this research productive (Stahl and King, 2020). Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that transferability is reached at through thick description. Therefore, the researcher has achieved transferability by providing an in-depth description of information taken from different opinions of the school managers.

Credibility is the term that explains how confident the qualitative researcher is in the truth of research study's findings. In this study, credibility has been shown where the researcher has used two different methods of collecting data (Stahl & King, 2020). As a case study, the researcher has involved participants from three schools enquiring for the same information, that provide triangulation.

Triangulation means looking at things from different angles. So, in this study triangulation was done as the researcher used interviews and focus Group Discussions in data collection. The

same questions were used in the two methods of data collection. The researcher ensured that the instruments to be used are effective by piloting. The researcher was assured that the questions to be used answers the theoretic framework used for the study Triangulation was also achieved by using multiple sources in the study. findings of the study provided many perspectives about the themes based on what the participants said on them. The 3 school head teachers, 3 deputy head teachers, 3 specialist teachers and 9 section heads from three different schools were involved in providing their information on ways of managing learners with vi. In that way, credibility has been achieved. Therefore, credibility in this study was achieved by the multiple methods used in data collection to achieve triangulation.

Dependability shows the extent that the study could be repeated by other researchers and that the findings would be consistent (Camoos, 2016). The establishment of dependability has been achieved in such a way that the researcher has described the information gathered from this study and other researcher the literature review.

Confirmability refers to the extent that the findings can be confirmed by another researcher. This occurs when the findings are based on participants responses and not any potential bias or personal motivations of the researcher. The researcher achieved trustworthiness through confirmability by providing an audit trail which highlights every step of data analysis which was made to provide a rationale for the decisions made. This portrays the participant's responses (Cairo, 2012).

3.11.1 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted at a nearby primary school with aim of testing the instruments before the data collection. The instruments which were the semi- structured interview guide were used for this pilot study. The pilot was carried out with an aim of checking if the instruments contains the right questions for the study. And also, to know if there is need for

improvement. The pilot was also conducted to determine the time that the participants may take to answer the questions in the semi-structured interview. Furthermore, the pilot was conducted to find out if the questions were clear and not ambiguous. Through this piloting exercise, useful changes were done to the semi-structured interview guide. Some adjustments were made on time so that participants were given enough time for them to come up with more information.

3.12 Data dissemination

Data dissemination is the process of communicating information through the defined channels and media in order to reach various target group and targeted group (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2013). It is the spreading of findings or output of research to relevant audiences, stakeholders for them to have access to results and conclusions that can help them make decisions. The purpose of data dissemination is to promote behavior change on the topic under study as the new information or insight is shared amongst the stakeholders. The concerned people are educated about the recent findings or what has been accomplished. The findings for this study will be accessible to the targeted group that include the school managers as well as other stakeholders. The thesis will be available in the Mzuzu University library.

3.13 Chapter summary

In summary, the chapter has dealt with the methodology which were used in carrying out this study. This was an interpretive study that employed qualitative approach and had three cases. This was done to enable a detailed investigation on management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. The study purposively, sampled site, schools and participants. Focus group discussions and interviews were used as instruments for data collection. And the data was analyzed using thematic approach. Therefore, this chapter was

sub-divided into research design, research approach and design, study site, sample size, sampling methods, data collection techniques and instruments, data management methods, ethical consideration, trustworthiness and data dissemination.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study that investigated management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools in three primary schools in the Central West Educational Division. Data was collected from three head teachers, three deputy head teachers, three specialist teachers and section heads from the three primary schools involved. The study was guided the following objectives:

- 1) Examine school managers' knowledge on visual impairment.
- 2) Assessing how school managers support learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.
- 3) Identifying factors affecting proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

There are many ways of presenting qualitative data. According to Cohen et al (2007), qualitative data can be organized and presented in five ways. This study has been analysed by

research objectives. This method returns the reader to concerns of the research thereby ‘closing the loop’ on the research questions or objective. Its advantage is that, all the relevant data from various data streams such as interviews, etc are collated to provide a collective answer to a research question or objective. There is systematization in the presentation of data. This enables, patterns, relationships, comparisons and qualifications across data types to be explored conveniently and clearly.

Therefore, the findings of this study are to be presented using objectives. This is a very useful way of data organisation as it draws together all the relevant data on management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream primary schools and preserves the coherence of the material. In this approach, all the relevant data from face to face semi structured interviews and focus group discussions were collated to provide collective answers to the research objectives. The findings of this study fall under themes in line with the main objective of the study which is to investigate ways on how school managers, assist learners with visual impairment in the mainstream primary schools.

4.2 Examining the level of school managers knowledge on visual impairment

The first objective was aimed at finding out the school managers level of knowledge about visual impairment. The school managers’ level of knowledge could be best understood in the context of Kounin’ s Instructional Theory of Management, which states that leaders should be knowledgeable to create conditions that increase the probability of learning. Schools need leaders who are supportive, motivating and knowledgeable. With knowledge, the school managers would understand the learners with visual impairment and provide them with correct instructions materials.

When the school managers were asked to describe the general understanding on the concept about visual impairment, they expressed their opinions in various ways. In order to establish their knowledge about visual impairment, the participants from school A, B and C gave the following response outlined in Table 4.1;

Table 4.1: School managers’ knowledge about visual impairment

SCHOOL	PARTICIPANT	DESCRIPTION OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT
A	Head teacher (A1)	These are learners that have sight problems
	Deputy head (A2)	Loss of sight and vital damage of an eye
B	Head teacher (B1)	Loss of vision
	Deputy head (B2)	Difficulty in seeing as sign of low vision
C	Head teacher (C1)	Problems with sight as a vital damage
	Deputy head (C2)	Challenges affecting an individual’s sight.

According to Table 4.1, three main themes emerged in context of what the school heads know about visual impairment in their mainstream schools. The themes were:

- Visual impairment as a loss of sight,
- Visual impairment as a vital damage of vision and
- Visual impairment as signs of low vision.

i) 4.2.1.1. Visual impairment as a loss of sight

Describing visual impairment as a loss of sight implies an individuals’ inability to see clearly without using vision correction tools. According to the study, it was found that, from the three schools, where the school managers were asked about visual impairment, three participants stated that visual impairment is a loss of sight. A head teacher from school A explained that,

a person with visual impairment encounters a reduced vision that can happen gradually, and that may lead to loss of vision and the individual may eventually become blind. In addition, the deputy head teacher for the same school A had to say that a learner with visual impairment is an individual whose sight problem has no cure or correction, resulting to blindness. Similarly, the deputy head teacher for school A said that visual impairment is a type of impairment that individual experiences a loss in sight. From school C, the head teacher described what visual impairment refers to by explaining that:

” ... visual impairment is when a person loses sight that even with correction, adversely affects a child’s vision...”

So, from this data, it can be said that knowledge of the school managers on visual impairment is restricted to those students who are totally blind. When people look at visual impairment in this category it means that they ignore those with low vision and yet these students also need attention in class. But if they are not recognised the attention may not be given to them. Attention like giving them space to sit at a place where they are comfortable to see clearly, providing large print for them read during exam may not be given. The only focus may be proving braille work to those who are totally blind. This implies that visual impairment is associated with a reduced quality of an individual’s life. As stated earlier on, visual impairment is a gradual reduction of an individual’s sight, school managers may easily lose track for them to know how and when an individual need -to be assisted. student lack knowledge on how to assist learners with visual impairment accordingly.

According to Koberlein, et. al (2013) explains that consequences associated with vision loss extend beyond the eye and vision system. This shows that visual impairment affects one’s quality of life. As education instructors, they should know how to handle these learners according to their needs. Without knowledge, the learners will be left behind because they are

being assisted accordingly. Therefore, teachers and head teachers need to support the student as the sight deteriorates by providing their needs as individuals. The school managers may fail to assist those with visual impairment at a certain level because of lack of knowledge.

ii) 4.2.1 2 Visual impairment as a vital damage of an eye.

On establishing what the school managers know about visual impairment, two participants gave their response on visual impairment as *a vital damage of an eye*. One specialist teacher from school C said that visual impairment is a vital damage of an eye. According to the class notes, Nkula (2011) explains that vital damage of an eye means a complete loss of an eye sight due to injuries or disease. And this person may be left with an impairment due to the injury caused. The data supported by the research done in the United Kingdom, where the ophthalmologist states that a visual impairment (VI) is when a person with blindness and/or partially sighted cannot do any work for which eyesight is essential due to a damage. Likewise, a deputy head teacher who is also a specialist teacher for school B stated that;

“...Some learners with visual impairment experience different problems with their eyes, some of the impairments may result from traumatic eye injuries and other complications. These damages cause a cloudy cover on the eye lenses, making it difficult for the eye to function properly again. Therefore, in that case, visual impairment can be termed as a vital damage on the eye...”

Here, it shows that only a few school managers can recognize learners with visual impairment by the cause of the impairment. as in this case, only specialist teachers have given this information defining visual impairment. This can affect the learner’s performance due to late interventions. MOEST (2009) also denotes visual impairment as a vital damage or loss of vision, a condition whereby an individual loses sight. This implies that, once the eyes are damaged, they significantly, affect an individual’s day to day activities. So, if the school managers have knowledge about a learner’s impairment, may provide instructional interventions for him/her to learn without any difficulties.

iii) Visual impairment as signs of low vision

One head teacher from school B said that visual impairment refers to signs of low vision. WHO (2008) defines low vision as having a complex trait that encompasses vision functioning, symptoms, emotional well-being, social relationship, concerns and convenience as they are affected by vision. One is said to have visual impairment if he or she still show signs of low vision even after treatment. Some of these signs are that, an individual is not able to see things in the centre of a vision, having peripheral visions, blurry vision and night blindness. The deputy head teacher from school B added that;

“...low vision cannot be corrected with prescriptions, eyeglasses or surgery. An individual may see or have a partial sight but not blind which is also a sign of visual impairment...”

With low vision, an individual has residual sight which is functional in one way or the other. These differences may all be caused by changes in contrast, illumination and by effect of glare. School managers should know that regardless of the age of disease onset or type of vision loss, visual impairment carries a heavy psychological burden on an individual. This is a visual problem that makes it hard to do everyday activities. Therefore, school managers need to understand the concept of low vision. This is so because a child with low vision has the very signs of visual impairment and with this knowledge, the teacher will be guided on what to do in order for the child to learn effectively. The data revealed that only one school manager out of all participants involved in the study, expressed that low vision may show a sign of visual impairment. Data has shown that the school managers' knowledge on visual impairment does not fully imply to all levels of visual impairment. From the findings and analysis presented, it can be concluded that, most of the school managers are able to describe persons with visual impairment if only they are blind but could not describe those who are low vision. Their knowledge shows that different school managers have different understanding of the term visual impairment. This may affect early identification and support of an individual.

In summary, WHO (2017) states that visual impairment is a broad term used to describe people having less vision than normal such that this impairment can vary from one person to another.

Moreover, visual impairment differs in severity from person to person and each learner may require different instruction and material in order to learn effectively. School managers' inadequate knowledge may affect learner's performance socially, physically, cognitive and emotionally. For instance, students may find it difficult to locate something or move around freely, in conditions where, they need assistance. In such situations, teachers without adequate knowledge may ruin the learners. If learners with low vision are not identified, they cannot be fully assisted as required in regular classrooms and they can be left behind in the day to day activities. mainstream class which is a legal requirement.

4.2.2 How school managers support learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

This objective aimed at establishing from the school managers what special attention of support is given to students with visual impairment considering that in the class we have regular students and those that have different challenges. Information from this objective came from interviews and focus group discussions whereby, three schools were involved. When the school managers were asked during the focus group discussions and face to face interviews, the following themes came out;

4.2.2.1 Provision of knowledge and skills

All the three schools reported that they provide knowledge and skills to the learners with visual impairment in their mainstream schools, and as evidenced by the following excerpts, most of the participants had this to say; class teachers provide instruction to the learners with visual impairment in the mainstream classroom together with the regular students.

Participant from school B who is a specialist teacher said that;

“ as a specialist teacher, I support learners with partial sight and those with total blindness in the resource room by providing them with basic skills that would help them to effectively work in the mainstream class. Skills on how to handle the writing materials such as Braille’s machine, Hand frame and stylus and other tactile writing materials necessary for their learning are imparted on them to learn effectively. I also teach them Braille alphabet and how to read and write. This information is provided in the resource room before they are sent back to their various mainstreaming classrooms. The regular teacher gives them work orally for the students to write in braille, of which I transcribe it back to print for the regular teachers to mark...”

This specialist teacher shows that she works hand in hand with the regular teachers as she assists learners with visual impairment in the resource room.

However, other section heads explained that;

“...Special attention is also given to those learners with partial sight in the mainstream classrooms though it is difficult to identify those with low vision. Unless someone has a serious issue concerning his /her sight. Once they are identified, regular class teachers provide them with large print...”

School managers need to be trained and equipped with skills and knowledge on how they can identify learners with visual impairment in the regular classrooms. Teaching learners with visual impairment is a challenging job because it requires teachers who are well equipped with extensive knowledge of a unique set of adaptive techniques as well as ability to effectively work with learners with visual impairment in regular classrooms. Students with visual impairment need a variety of specialized materials and equipment for them to function effectively in the school environment. Provision of learning support to learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools requires modification of the learning environment, and some adaptations for the learners to learn effectively (McLinden 2017). According to Till (2008) interventions should be made for the modifications of the learning environment in order to provide an instrumental support to the learners of visual impairment in the mainstream schools. This shows that school managers and peers have a positive impact on academic support of an individual. Therefore, school managers have a very important role in assisting

the students with visual impairment to overcome the barriers posed with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

In addition, most school heads from these three schools mentioned about modification and adaptation of the instructions as another factor.

4.2.2.2 Modification and adaptation of instruction

One participant from school B had to say that:

“... at this school, learners with visual impairment are being placed in the mainstream classroom to learn with the regular students as a way of inclusion. Since learners with visual impairment have different levels of sight, the regular class teachers need to adjust their teaching through adaptations and modifications of the instruction to accommodate those with various challenges in the class....”.

The ultimate goal of the school managers is to create a classroom environment that has the least restrictive situation to meet the needs of all students. The role of regular teachers is to create user-friendly learning environment for learners with visual impairment by supporting them in various ways. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (2014) states that the role of teachers in an inclusive set up is required to facilitate the learning of children of impairments alongside the students they are used to teaching in the mainstream classrooms. Mostly, the specialist teachers work hand in hand with other regular teachers to fully assist the learners with visual impairment. So, this shows that, among the staff members at a school, specialist teachers have knowledge and skills on how to handle learners with visual impairment in the resource room.

On the other hand, when probed why they feel supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream becomes a problem to most of the regular teachers, participant from school A stated that:

“...of course, am a teacher but, i don’t have knowledge about braille ... As teachers in the mainstream classrooms we face challenges when handling this category of learners. We need to be trained on the same...”

Many regular teachers are not able to work with learners having visual impairment. This implies that, learners in the mainstream have minimal support on their academic work. Mberimana (2018) explains that students with visual impairment have the right to an appropriate education that is guided by knowledgeable school managers who work collaboratively with regular mainstream teachers. Some may need Braille while others may need magnifiers or use other low vision aid technologies. These teachers who provide the necessary continuity and support, need to access training on an ongoing basis, Grimes et al. (2013).

A participant from School C explained that;

“... the absence of the specialist teachers in the mainstream classrooms, learners of visual impairment suffer. This is because, they have no-one to assist them accordingly since we don’t have skills and knowledge of helping them. For example, in the case of those who uses braille and other learning equipment, they need well trained teachers. in the absence of these experts, it becomes difficult to work with these learners effectively.”

School managers are there to encourage the students use visual aids and resources when learning. Things like glass magnifier, large print books be used by those with low vision. Learners with visual impairment may appear isolated if not well supported in the mainstream schools as their learning environment

4.2.2.3 Accessible teaching and learning materials

One head teacher from school A had this to say;

“...regular teachers fail to provide recommendable support to those with visual impairment in the mainstream. Learners with visual impairment expect to be assisted accordingly in their academic work. There is always too much work to be done by the

specialist teachers for these learners to learn effectively, such as transcribing braille into print, which is done by them as experts. The school managers wish is not to leave these learners behind, unfortunately they lack support. Sometimes they feel that they are not taken on board because their teachers leave their work unattended to for days...”

The study revealed that teaching and learning resources play a very important role in the teaching and learning of learners with visual impairment since they learn through other senses rather than sense of sight. Students with visual impairments typically need adapted materials for them to be successful in their education. Adaptation refers to those materials that have been modified to suit the learners' needs. In the mainstream schools, modifications can be made to texts books, worksheets instruction, resources to make them accessible to students with VI. Some examples are large print, assistive devices, tactile books and audio books.

One of the participants explained that learners with visual impairment have different problems that hinders their education. She said that teachers in the mainstream meet different levels of visual impairment that makes it difficult for them to handle effectively. Moreover, one participant from school A pointed out that the school going children with visual impairment in the mainstream experience lower levels of education. In most cases they need to be guided by the sighted. Vision plays an important role in student development and in his or her daily performance.

4.2.2.4 Teacher involvement

“...as teachers in the mainstream schools, we give advice to the learners on what is expected to be done as learners in their classrooms and also during their free time...”

School managers can support the basic psychological needs of students with visual impairment in the mainstream schools by providing them with competence and autonomy support during teaching. The students experience has great influence on their different activities in their mainstream classroom. Visual impairment can seriously hinder the students' motivation to engage in learning tasks which is caused by imitation, observation and giving meaning of real

objects, concepts and ideas. Therefore, teachers of learners with visual impairment have a very important role in helping the students to overcome barriers posed by their visual impairment. Lynch (2011) states that guidance and practical assistance help individuals with visual impairment cope with the challenges they face when interacting as a student. In addition, school managers are responsible for creating safe and accessible learning environment that trigger student's motivation to engage in learning tasks. One of the participants of the research explained that

“School managers make sure that the students conform to the advice given. By following these instructions, fear of the unknown is avoided, hence, the learners become independent as they interaction in the school society. These behaviours contribute to the development of the feeling of being valued and accepted in the school.

4.2.3 Factors affecting proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

From the interviews and focus group discussions that I conducted in the three schools, so many factors came out that are likely affecting the proper management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools. Table 4.2 outlines the factors which were found.

Table 4.2 Factors affecting proper management in mainstream schools

SCHOOL	POTENTIAL FACTORS
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate specialist teachers handling learners with visual impairment. As a boarding school with totally blind learners and some learners having low vision, there are only two specialist teachers for visual impairment • The school lacks proper infrastructures for assisting learners with visual impairment despite having a small resource room catering for few individuals. • Unprotected environment within the school premises. • Large numbers of learners in the mainstream classes which makes it difficult for the class teachers and specialist teachers to work effectively. • scarcity of teaching and learning resources which are very expensive such as braille, stylus and other materials for visual impairment. • inadequate teacher -learner support • lack skills and knowledge on how to assist learners with visual impairment
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment. • Labelling of teachers handling learners with special needs in both resource rooms and mainstream classes. • Insufficient number of specialist teachers working with learners with visual impairment • Inadequate teacher-learner support • Inadequate teaching and learning resources for learners with visual impairment • Lack skills and knowledge on how to handle learners with visual impairment • Large numbers of learners in the mainstream classes. • Frequent absence of learners with visual impairment because they stay a far distance away from the school
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment in mainstream classes. • Inadequate teacher and learner support to the learners with visual impairment • Inadequate specialist teachers for all the categories of special needs. • No resource room for assisting learners with visual impairment. • Lack of teacher involvement from staff • Lack teaching and learning resources catering for learners with visual impairment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack skills and knowledge on how to handle learners with visual impairment • Inadequate teacher- learner support. • Shortage of specialist teachers for all categories • Unfriendly learning environment whereby learners with visual impairment • Large number of learners in the mainstream class
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The most common factor that participants mentioned was;

4.2.3.1 Inadequate teachers and learner support:

One of the specialist teachers from school C had this to say;

“...am the only specialist teacher here at school B, trained as a specialist for visual impairment. most of the times I meet learners with multiple impairments and of different categories, of which I fail to handle them alone. But they need to be supported by those specialized on that field too. Other teachers in the mainstream fail to provide recommendable support to those with different impairments in the mainstream. The school managers wish is not to leave these learners behind, but they lack support. As a result, these learners feel as not taken on board.... “

Lack of teacher support was one of the major challenges mentioned in all the three schools. In all these schools, although learners with visual impairment were accommodated in the mainstream classrooms, not all regular class teachers were comfortable to assist them. This shows that, learners support in these mainstream schools is not fully met by the school managers. According to McKenzie (2019) states that, most learners do not have access to the curriculum on an equal basis with non-disabled learners because their teachers do not support them. This is in line with the agreement of the United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2006) and the Salamanca statement (1994) which states that persons with impairments can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education. In this regard, learners with visual impairment cannot access their education effectively if they are not accommodated in the regular classes. Hence their future can be hopeless. Studies have indicated that schools need to create the least restrictive learning environment to meet the needs

of all students regardless of their impairments, of which, many regular teachers seem not taught how to teach students with visual impairment (Hyunjeong, 2014).

4.2.3.2 Large number of learners in the mainstream classes

One participant from school A had this to say;

“... there is always too much work to be done by the specialist teachers in the resource room. Such as transcribing braille to print and from print to braille, which is done by trained and specialized teachers who can read and write in braille...I can never finish the intended work before being interrupted by learners who need my assistance. Braille papers are always hipped on my desk to be transcribed...”

This shows that it is difficult to handle /manage learners with visual impairment in large classes. Those learners with visual impairment need one to one support. This study revealed that most of schools are experiencing large numbers of learners per class. As a government issue allocation of teaching staff seem to become a merely problem to handle in the mainstream classes. Under-staffing is a common issue in most of the schools in Malawi. For instance, School A has got many students of learners with visual impairment, other learners with hearing impairment and others with multiple disabilities against a few numbers of specialist teachers which is so cumbersome. The claims by Rivera (2017) that teachers effectively implement course content, instructional pedagogy and technology much better in smaller classes. However, this is not reflected in this research study. Learners with visual impairment need to be assisted accordingly in their academic work. So, provision of specialised teaching and learning resources is essential for the student’s success. Lack of teachers’ support is a major limiting factor in the process of educating learners with visual impairment. This attitude generally stems from lack of accessible instructional materials to all students with visual impairment who need support for them to excel in the classroom activities. Degefa, (2001), states that exclusion of learners with visual impairment from school participation subsequently,

has a devastating impact on the physical, socio, academic and psychological wellbeing of the group. Learners with visual impairment need to be supported in their learning environment.

4.2.3.3 Lack of teaching and learning resources

The deputy head teacher stated that;

“...most of the teaching and learning materials for those who are not sighted not only expensive but also scarce. The school fails to support these learners in the mainstream classroom because of lack of these equipment. Things like braille papers, braille machine, hand frame, stylus are very expensive and even scarce to find...”

Learners with visual impairment need to participate fully in regular activities in the mainstream schools. School managers need to provide accessible instructional materials to all students depending upon their level of impairment. Chitiyo et al. (2016) explains that whatever the degree of impairment is, students with special needs are expected to participate fully in the classrooms. In absence of appropriate teaching and learning resources, learners with visual impairment performs poorly in the academics. Poor performance generally stems from lack of accessible instructional materials to all students with visual impairment who need support for them to excel in the classroom activities. Most of the participants of the study in all the 6 schools narrated that teaching and learning resources are very scarce for learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. One of the participants of the study said that

Teaching and learning materials are very essential in the process of imparting skills and knowledge to the learners with visual impairment. They typically need teaching and learning resources to fully access the school curriculum. Some learners may use braille, bold line books, tactile books, audio books, large print books and other assistive devices. The unfortunate part is that these resources are scarce and also very expensive.

From the findings above, it shows that there are many factors that may affect proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

4.2.3.4 Lack of knowledge and skills

One section head explained that;

“...at this school there are 5 learners with visual impairment, 2 are totally blind, 3 have severe low vision. All of them need to use braille but the school has one Perkins Braille machine which makes it difficult for the class teachers to assist these learners effectively. The school has one specialist teacher for visual impairment. Moreover, there are other learners with other impairments who are also in need of our support...”

School managers need knowledge on how to assist learners with visual impairment and expand sets of skills that are distinctly vision-related. Most teachers face challenges in the way they handle learners with visual impairment because they do not possess the required skills and knowledge. They need skills and knowledge on how they can assist these learners in the mainstream classrooms. School managers who have no skills and knowledge demotivate these learners because there is no one to encourage them. According to the participants of the research study, most of the school managers stated that, they find it difficult to assist the learners with visual impairment. They have no skills or knowledge on how they can assist those with visual impairment in their classrooms. Section head from school B said that,

“...Those with knowledge and skills appreciated that it becomes easier to work with learners with visual impairment more especially if one has skills...”

Teachers need to use real objects for the learners to learn at least the concepts and meanings of words. Chilora (2016) explains that locally available resources which are readily available in the environment could be used to promote effective teaching and learning in the classroom. when teaching those with impairment, students should be able to connect the teaching materials with the real world (Engin & Seven, 2007). However, one participant from school C revealed that most of the teachers do not know how to handle these resources like the Mobit readers, hand frame and others. This makes the regular teachers refrain from assist the learners with visual impairment. In this study, almost all the participants of the research complained that they

have no knowledge on how they cannot use the specialised resources and equipment such as the Braille machine, hand frames, the orbit reader and many others which are used by learners with visual impairment. This equipment can only be used by the experts who are specialists on that field. Regular teachers don't have skills to assist learners with visual impairment in the mainstream classrooms.

4.2.3.5 Shortage of specialist teachers

The school managers from schools A, B and C explained that;

“... at this school, there are many learners with visual impairment, but we only have two specialist teachers for visual impairment and no specialist for other categories...”

Similarly, one of the school head teachers explained that;

“...I was once an itinerant teacher who was assigned 8 schools to be assisting learners with visual impairment in one zone where there were no any other specialists...”

In situation like this, specialist teachers are too much involved and this kind of situation really shows that there was an alarming shortage of specialist teachers in the schools around that zone. In Malawian primary schools, most schools are short of specialist teachers. They meet different categories of impairments of which sometimes they need extra support for them to be effectively assisted. Malawi embraces the tenets of inclusive education whereby the country's intention is to improve the quality of Special Needs Education UNESCO, (2014). The services that are intended to support all children regardless of their disabilities. The Montfort Teachers Training College continues to train specialist teachers in various categories of special needs every year. But still in most primary schools, not all categories of special needs are met. (Chitiyo, 2013) explains that one of the main challenges in African countries regarding inclusion is shortage of qualified teachers with the requisite skills to provide an appropriate education for their children with special needs. Development of teachers is important because

the high standards of student learning is maintained. In this regard, primary schools can have enough specialist teachers to cater for all categories of special needs education who can be supporting learners with visual impairment. Training of more specialist teachers is vital in Malawian schools because it will influence the effective learning of students with impairments. Malawi, being a signatory to 1994 Salamanca statement and Framework for Action on Special needs education around the globe, the matter on training of specialist teachers is not arguable Chitiyo et. al. (2019).

4.2.3.6 Negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment.

Many participants from two schools mentioned about negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment. One of the participants explained that;

“...Most of the times learners with visual impairment are not supported in the mainstream classrooms when I am not present, they tell the learners that; Inutu aphunzitsi anu lero kulibe...and they are left unattended to. Which is very unfortunate...”

School managers are basically responsible for assisting learners in the schools. Negative attitude towards learners with visual impairment is a major challenge in the mainstream schools UNESCO (2014). This study revealed that specialist teachers in the schools under study have no support from the staff members. Only few individuals could show interest in assisting the learners with visual impairment in the absence of the specialist teacher, such as transcribing braille into print. These school managers work tirelessly as specialists in the mainstream though being label, Gibbs & Elliot (2015). Similar research on labelling was carried out by Gibbs & Elliot (2015) who investigated between the labels and the teachers being label. They demonstrated that people make different judgements depending on whether the terms used or being label with, are meant for bullying or for the good will. As a researcher I have found that, labelling brings discouragement. Teachers' behaviours should anchor the learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. This is one of the many factors hindering inclusive

education in Malawi. Those school managers working tirelessly in the mainstream schools need to be encouraged through incentives by government so that they should not be discouraged by others.

4.3 Summary of the chapter.

This chapter has presented and discussed the findings of the research study by following the three specific objectives. The study had investigated ways of managing learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools in the three selected primary schools in Central Western Division. The three specific objectives were; To determine school managers knowledge about visual impairment, assess ways of supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools and to identify factors that affect proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. The researcher conducted interviews and focus group discussions with school managers who revealed important ways of management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. The findings have revealed challenges that school managers face as they are supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools in the three schools in Lilongwe district. Such challenges as minimal knowledge on the concept of visual impairment, inadequate support from the staff members, scarcity of teaching and learning resources, negative attitudes towards learners with visual impairment among others. Therefore, this study has revealed the challenges that school managers face in supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate ways of managing learners with visual impairment in the selected three primary schools in Central West Division. The research was guided by the following research objectives: determine school managers' knowledge about visual impairment, assess ways of supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools and identify factors affecting proper management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools. Therefore, this chapter provides the conclusions, recommendations and areas for further studies.

5.2 Summary of findings

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study in investigating ways of managing learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

On determining the school managers' knowledge on visual impairment in the mainstream schools, the participants revealed that many school managers' knowledge is minimal. This is so because they had a general description of what visual impairment is. A few individuals could clearly express what they actually know about visual impairment.

On how school managers support learners with visual impairment, the data has shown that specialist teachers assist these learners in both the resource rooms and the mainstream. The section heads, school head teachers and deputy head teachers and specialist teachers work hand in hand in the mainstream.

Lastly, the study has also revealed that there are many factors that affect the proper management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. Such as negative attitude towards visual impairment, lack of knowledge and skills on how to use the devices meant for visual impairment.

5.2.1 School managers knowledge on visual impairment

The results of the study on determining the school managers knowledge on visual impairment revealed three themes. The themes emerged when asked to describe the term visual impairment. which are as follows;

- Visual impairment as a loss of sight
- Visual impairment as a vital damage of vision
- Visual impairment as signs of low vision.

5.2.2 How school managers support learners with visual impairment in mainstream Schools.

In terms of how school managers support learners having visual impairment it tells us that school managers need to come up with various ways of supporting learners with impairment in the mainstream classes. The government should look into it that more specialist teachers are trained in order to be deployed in the primary schools. To add on that, the government should also provide adequate teaching and learning materials to schools where they are accommodating learners with visual impairment.

5.2.3 Factors that affect proper management of learners with visual impairment

The study has found that learners with visual impairment feel welcomed in the mainstream schools if they are supported accordingly. The school managers provide to the learners what is available on the ground. In most of the schools the regular teachers accommodated all kinds

of learners despite their impairments in the mainstream classrooms. However, it was found that they face a lot of challenges when it comes to the way of handling them as a mainstream class. Different challenges bring down the learner performance as they feel unwelcomed in the mainstream class.

5.3 Conclusion

From the findings of this study, the researcher concludes that most of the school managers lack knowledge on visual impairment. Most of the school managers can identify Students having blindness but have challenges to identify those with partial sight who seem to be sighted but have low vision.

In the mainstream schools, learners with visual impairment are mostly supported by specialist teachers who were trained on ways of handling students with visual impairment. In absence of the specialist teachers, learners with visual impairment are not supported as expected.

School managers meet different challenges when assisting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools due to lack of skills and knowledge. In terms of the support staff, the schools find it difficult to cope up with the increased number of learners in the mainstream classes. In such cases, most learners with visual impairment are not assisted accordingly due to the inadequate teaching and learning facilities in the mainstream schools.

The researcher concludes that school managers who are regular teacher meet different challenges when handling learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools. With inadequate skills and knowledge about visual impairment create uncondusive working environments in the mainstream schools. Learners with visual impairment are set back as the school managers have no requirements for effective teaching of learners with visual impairment. Therefore, the researcher suggested that there is need to provide knowledge and

skills through trainings to all regular teachers for them to work effectively in the mainstream schools. Once regular teachers are trained, they will have knowledge on how to support the learners accordingly, use the available teaching and learning resources effectively in the mainstream classroom.

5.4 Recommendations

The study on management of learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools is very important to both the school managers and the Malawi government.

Based on the findings of this study, the following are recommendations:

1. The Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Education and other development partners which are responsible for teacher training should come up with strategies on how the regular school managers be equipped with knowledge about visual impairment. This can be achieved through in-service trainings and continuous professional development (CPD) programs
2. The Government should look into it that teaching and learning resources are readily available for learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.
3. The Government should motivate the teachers with incentives for efforts made in the mainstream schools
4. The Government should include school managers such as specialist teachers in decision making and planning forums to be informed on issues concerning visual impairment in mainstream school. this will help the government officials to know how to support learners with visual impairment.
5. School managers should be provided with enough specialist teachers catering for all categories in the mainstream schools for effective support of learners.

5.5 Limitations of the study

A study may experience some limitation in one way or the other. In this study, the following were the limitations that were encountered. The first limitation is that, some of the participants were not willing to participate in providing information such that the researcher had to strive for their participation.

In addition, the study was conducted in three schools within Central West Educational Division amongst six educational divisions.

The last limitation is that only 18 school heads were involved in the study out of many teachers within a school. Therefore, the above-mentioned limitations may influence the findings in one way or the other on ways of supporting learners with visual impairment in the mainstream schools.

5.6 Areas for further study

This study was done in public schools found in Lilongwe district which is a capital city of Malawi focusing on learners with visual impairment.

A similar study should be carried out in the remote areas found in other districts other than a city with an aim of establishing further knowledge on how learners with visual impairment are supported and the challenges they face.

This study has found that learners with deaf blind have unique impairment combination of visual and hearing impairment. Therefore, further studies should investigate the proper ways of managing learners with deaf blind in the mainstream schools.

5.7 Study contributions

This study has revealed different challenges that the school managers face in the mainstream schools. Heads of the schools are working hand in hand with the specialist teachers despite the challenges they meet. The findings of this study will help various stakeholders who will need to intervene and find out solutions for the challenges that are met in the mainstream schools. The study will help the government through Ministry of Education to verify the needs and challenges of the school managers in the mainstream schools. Therefore, the study can provide a basis to other research studies on management of learners in the mainstream schools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Form



MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Informed Consent Form for Research in

MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS: A CASE OF SELECTED SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL WEST EDUCATIONAL DIVISION

Introduction

I am Alice Lomosi (MEDLM 1820) from **Mzuzu University** doing research on ‘**Management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools: A case of selected schools in Central West Education Division.** This consent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me or of another researcher.

Purpose of the research

This research aims to **investigate ways on how school heads manage learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools.**

Type of Research Intervention

This research will involve your participation in a group discussion and/or individual interview.

Participant Selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because **you are the appropriate people who can give me right information about visual impairment**

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate nothing will change. You may skip any question and move on to the next question.

Duration

The research takes place for a period of **one year**.

Risks

You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion/interview/survey if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research.

Sharing the Results

The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared with you and your community before it is made widely available to the public. Following, we will publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Who to Contact

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact: Dr Margaret Mdolo, Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu. Phone number: 0993801059.

APPENDIX: B PERMISSION LETTER FOR THE DEM

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Luwinga.

The District Education Manager

(Lilongwe Urban)

P/Bag 71, Lilongwe.

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I am Alice Lomosi, a post graduate student at Mzuzu University, pursuing a Master of Education in Leadership Management. I am carrying out a study on Management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools: a case of selected schools in Central West Division (CWED), as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of a master's degree. Focus group and interviews will be conducted in the three selected schools.

So, I would like to ask for your permission to carry out this study in the following schools; Mchesi Primary, Tsabango LEA and Malingunde school for the Blind.

Attached is an introductory letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Lomosi

APPENDIX C PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEM (LL RURAL EAST)

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Mzuzu.

07th April, 2022.

The District Education Manager

(Lilongwe Rural East)

P.O.BOX 71

Lilongwe.

Dear Sir/ Madam,

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I am, Alice Lomosi, a post graduate Student at Mzuzu University, pursuing a Masters of Education in Leadership Management. I am carrying out a study on Management of Learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools: a case of selected schools in Central West Division (CWD) as a partial fulfilment of the requirement of the award of a Master's Degree. Focus group and interviews will be conducted in three selected schools.

So, I would like to ask for your permission to carry out this study at Tsabango Primary school. Attached is an introductory letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours Sincerely,

Alice Lomosi.

**APPENDIX : D PERMISSION LETTER FOR THE DEM (LILONGWE
RURAL WEST)**

Mzuzu University

P/Bag 201

Mzuzu

07th April, 2022

The District Education Manager (Lilongwe Rural West)

P.O.BOX 494

Lilongwe

Dear Sir/ Madam

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH

I am Alice Lomosi, a post graduate student at Mzuzu University, pursuing a Masters of Education in Leadership and Management. I am carrying out a study on Management of Learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools: a case of selected schools in Central West Division (CWED), as a partial fulfilment of the requirements of the award of a Master's Degree. Focus group and interviews will be conducted in three selected schools.

So, I would like to ask for your permission to carry out this study at Malingunde School for The Blind. Attached is an introductory letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours sincerely,

Alice Lomosi.

APPENDIX: E LETTER OF INTRODUCTION:MS ALICE LOMOSI

Mzuzu University



MZUZU UNIVERSITY

Department of Teaching, Learning and
Curriculum Studies

Private Bag 201
L u w i n g a
M z u z u 2
M A L A W I

Tel: (265) 01 320 575/722
Fax: (265) 01 320 568
mdolo.mm@mzuni.ac.mw

1ST APRIL 2022

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

Ms Alice Lomosi is a registered Master of Education (Leadership and Management) Program student at Mzuzu University. She has been cleared by the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) to collect data for the research study she is conducting as a requirement for the program.

Kindly assist her accordingly.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Margaret M. Mdolo

Program Coordinat

APPENDIX: F PERMISSION LETTER FOR THE HEAD TEACHER

FROM: Alice Lomosi (Mrs. Kagwa), Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwinga 2, Mzuzu.

TO: The Headteacher, Mlodza Primary School, P.O Box 20106, Kawale, Lilongwe.

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR A PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH AT YOUR SCHOOL.

I am a post graduate student at Mzuzu University pursuing a Master of Education in Leadership and Management. I am carrying out a study on **Management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools: a case study of selected schools in Central West Division (CWED)** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of the master's degree. My study will involve interviews and focus group discussion with the school head teacher, deputy head teacher, section heads and a specialist teacher for visual impairment. I intend to protect the participants' information by using pseudonyms. I will require them to sign a consent form for their participation in my research. I also intend to protect the institution and the participants involved in the research. I am, therefore, writing to request for a permission to carry out this study at your school.

Attached is an introductory letter from Mzuzu University.

Yours Sincerely,

Alice Lomosi

APPENDIX G CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I have been invited to participate in research about **management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools.**

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

**APPENDIX:H INTERVIEW GUIDE TO THE HEAD TEACHES AND DEPUTY
HEAD TEACHERS**

I am Alice Lomosi. This interview will focus on management of learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools. I will be asking you questions. I encourage you to be free and answer the given question sincerely. However, if you are not ready to answer please be free to say so. I will be recording the discussions and I will also be writing some notes. This will help me to remember when I go back and write.

1. Briefly explain the meaning of special needs education. -----

2. What roles do the school have in special needs education? -----

3. What do you know about Visual impairment? -----

4. How many students with visual impairment do you have?
5. In what way do the teachers assist learners with visual impairment in their classrooms
6. Apart from visual impairment, what other categories of special Education need does the school enrolls? -----

7. Do you meet any challenges in supporting learners with visual impairment? -----

8. What role do you play in supporting learners with Visual impairment as a head teacher?

9. What can be done to improve effectiveness of teaching learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools? -----

10. How do you support specialist teachers in the school? -----

--

11. Any other comments concerning visual impairments at this school? -----

Thank you very much for spending your precious time answering my questions. I really appreciate for the information you have provided. The information will be used to write a research.

APPENDIX: I GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR A FOCUS GROUP

(Head teachers, deputy head teacher, Section heads and specialist teachers)

I am Alice Lomosi. In this focus group we will discuss your experience on special needs education for learners with visual impairment. I will be asking you questions and let me encourage everyone to participate in the discussion. Everyone will be given a chance to provide his or her own views. I will be recording the discussion and also taking notes so that I should remember what we have discussed.

1. What do you know about Special Needs Education?-----

2. What are the categories of special educational needs found at this mainstream school?-

3. What are the challenges that you face in supporting learners with visual impairment? -

4. What kind of interventions do you think can be made to eliminate the challenges met?

5. Apart from the school's interventions, who else support the learners with visual impairment academically? -----

6. As heads of the school, what do you think should be done to support learners with visual impairment for them to excel in their education? -----
7. How are the learners with visual impairment supported academically as a mainstream school? -----

8. What do you think need to be done in assisting the learners with visual impairment in mainstream schools? -----

---Thank you very much for your contribution. Your participation will mean a lot to my study. I really appreciate for the information given. And I will use it to write my research.

**APPENDIX: J STATEMENT BY THE RESEARCHER/PERSON TAKING
CONSENT**

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the research project. I confirm the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.